/page 41 continued/

Peyotists express the difference between Peyote and Christianity by the phrase "Christianity is too difficult". This in spite of the similar ethics, the rigors of the Peyote meeting and the rigors of the older quests for power. What I think is involved here is 1) a fundamental difference in world view concerning the nature of man and his relation to the supernatural world and 2) the natural difficulty for a people to give up old ways and take on new ones, especially those new ways demanded by missionaries which frequently did not jibe with their own Christian teachings.

According to my informants, Peyote has no concept of sin. That is, in spite of the fact that a Peyotist should not drink, murder, or whatever, he is not destroyed or cut off from Peyote if he does so. The ethics are felt to be good, if a man does not follow them he will incur the ill will of his neighbors and if he persists in his ways, will probably be an unhappy man. But he is neither condemned to hell nor is he denied the benefits of Peyote. Social sanctions there may be but no divine punishments. He is not cast out of the fold as it were. This is much different than Christianity with its supernaturally ordained edicts, the breaking of which precipitates both human and supernatural punisment which may even be irrevocable condemnation. The Christian sees man as being forever at the mercy of a higher being to whom he must pray for forgiveness, he is forever at a disadvantage. The Comanche feels that man is a small creature who must be borne up by the supernatural and who may suffer known consequences if he disregards specific directives in regard to the preservation of power, etc., but he is never an abject being who, by a human slip may lose his very humanity. It is considered (by older Peyotists) very difficult to give up this view of the self in return for the Christian view.

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
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and in her most difficult doctoring situations and in all her most criticial moments, it is to the spirits of her teachers that she turns for aid. 115 159 756 787 755

The Supernatural Universe

Sanapia's description of the supernatural universe is full of contradictory elements. This is not as great an obstacle to action as it may seem since she addresses each element individually as the situation demands. She has no need to attempt to grasp the entirety of this universe at once. Sanapia is able to select from her potpourri of supernaturalistic notions the ones which best suit a particular occasion. 115 159 756 775

She believes that living human beings share the earth with the ghosts, or malevolent spirits of deceased humans who, alive, led evil lives. The ghosts can enter into the world of men, but men cannot enter the world of ghosts except through death. Also, somewhere, neither in the plane of living man nor in the plane of ghost existence, is the realm of pure, unembodied supernatural power. Such entities as the sun, the earth, and the eagle are able to tap this power and thus possess it to a greater extent than can mortal men. Power can be acquired by men only through secondhand channels and never from its source. A mortal would be killed if exposed to pure power. The power, from its original source, is inexhaustible. 115 159 756 778

In yet another plane of existence are found the spirits of good men such as the disciples of Jesus and the spirits of Sanapia's mother and uncle. This realm is not quite like heaven, which is the abode of God and Jesus and the eternal home of those ordinary souls who have nothing to offer the world of the living, as do the spirits of Medicine men or the disciples of Jesus. Hell is somewhere deep in the earth. Sanapia believes that it is the special eternal home of evil white men. Her notions of the nature of hell follow the standard Christian concept. 115 159 756 775 776 [772] [177]

Peyote is similar to the sun or the eagle in its ability to embody an extraordinary degree of supernatural power. However, unlike the sun or the eagle, peyote comes from the Christian God as a sign of his love for all Indian people. According to Sanapia, the sun has existed longer then the Christian God, and is therefore entirely self-sufficient. 115 159 756 755 778 776

Thus Sanapia can become more or less Christian, peyotist, or Plains shaman as varying situations present themselves. By not assigning a negative value to contradictory elements in her supernaturalistic universe and by oversimplifying the similarities, Sanapia possesses a flexibility which confounds any attempt to present a very cogent description of her "religion." If a key pervasive theme had to be chosen, it probably would be concerned with the idea of supernatural power and the desirability of its acquisition and control. 115 159 756 771 [778]

A Successor

At the present time Sanapia is beginning to consider the problem of a successor, for she feels that her doctoring career is rapidly approaching its final 115 159 756 593